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ABSTRACT

Imaging, or disciplined daydreaming, can be used in the composition class to expose students to their innate creativity, lessen writing anxiety, refresh memories before writing of personal experiences, and make impersonal subjects, such as historical events, vital and personal. Teachers can construct a classroom imaging session (which takes about 50 minutes, including 15 for writing) by (1) guiding students through progressive relaxation of their bodies; (2) introducing a predetermined locale and asking students questions about the locale that evoke visual, auditory, and olfactory images; (3) leading students on a "tour" through the locale; (4) instructing the students, if they are to be given control over their imaging, to return to every day awareness after they have fulfilled the purpose of the activity; and (5) having students write of their experiences. To insure a more effective imaging experience, teachers should have students sit in a circle, make their language as precise and clear as possible, introduce familiar locales in early imaging experiences, and deliver instructions in a rhythmic and relaxed voice. (MM)

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Imaging as a Heuristic

I would like to begin my presentation with the nineteenth-century German chemist Friedrick Kekule's description of his discovery of the molecular structure of benzene as quoted by Arthur Koestler in The Act of Creation (New York: MacMillan, 1969):

> I turned my chair to the fire and dozed. Again the atoms were gamboling before my eyes. This time smaller groups kept modestly in the background. My mental eyes, rendered more acute by repeated visions of this kind, could now distinguish larger structures of manifold conformations; long rows, sometimes more closely fitted together; all twining and twisting in snake like motion. But look! What was that? One of the snakes had seized hold of its own tail, and the form whirled mockingly before my eyes. As if by a flash of lightning, I awoke. (p. 118)

Kekule, after much conscious effort to discern the molecular structure of benzene, received while in a receptive state of mind the necessary insight that benzene was a ring and not as he had thought an open structure.

This afternoon, I will be explaining how to use imaging as a heuristic in your classrooms. And imaging is a way for students to tap the same source of information which Kekule had tapped.

I call this technique imaging, having borrowed the term from Dr. Carl Simonton, a radiologist, who uses the technique as an auxiliary therapy to the more established cancer therapies. The names for this technique are many. Psychologists prefer the name, imagery. In popular literature, it's called, visualization, musing, reverie, imagining, magical thinking, fantasy, and guided meditation. I didn't choose any of these names because

CS 207 889

they either denoted a condition or through popular misuse, their meanings have become ambiguous or emotionally charged. Imaging, however, denotes a process, and it is emotionally neutral.

For the purpose of this presentation, I have defined imaging as a discipline by which a person learns to receive information which is usually presented in pictures though not limited to that type of vehicle, from one's self. The keyword in the definition is receive. If you want, you can think of this as "receptive thinking" as opposed to "active thinking." Those two terms are borrowed from Arthur Deikman's essay, "Bimodal Consciousness and Mystic Experience." "Active thinking" for instance would be used to get yourself from here back to your room. But after a few drinks in the bar, you might use "receptive thinking" to return to your room. Or, you know a painting is beautiful--that's "receptive thinking." But to understand what makes that painting beautiful, you would use "active thinking." Or in terms of writing, revision would be like "active thinking," whereas free writing would be like "receptive thinking."

Imaging can be subdivided into three different types. Adelaide Bry, in her book, Visualization, explains that imaging can be either programed, open ended, or guided. Programed imaging involves the repeated visualization of a certain image or images. In a classroom, this type of imaging would work best when students are attempting to learn a skill. Open ended and guided are heuristics. In open ended, the students are given control over the imaging process, letting their images lead the way. Guided, as the name states, is controlled by someone who is not imaging. In practice, these three types may merge together: the sample imaging

activity you have combines all three. (See Appendix # 1)

Those who use imaging assume whether they know it or not that 1) all thought is not conscious, and 2) the unconscious contains valuable information.

Now that you know what imaging is, let me put the technique in perspective for you by summarizing the history of its uses in other disciplines.

Imaging has had its longest continual use as a beginning stage in the development of religious experiences. In the East, imaging is a preliminary step to meditation. For instance, in raja yoga, it helps to teach concentration, a necessary step to the achievement of a meditative state. In hatha yoga, it promotes greater flexibility of muscles, another preliminary step to meditation. In the West, the most thorough application of imaging for religious purposes appears in St. Ignatius of Loyola's spiritual exercises, which encourage the practitioner to visualize events from Jesus's life as an attempt to expand his/her spiritual awareness.

Though imaging has been a religious technique for centuries, it did not become popular until psychologists began using it. Basically imaging has been used by psychologists to improve their patients' self-awareness. Freud tinkered with it; Jung used it, and later Jungian and Gestalt therapists refined its application. Even behavioral psychologists got into the act by applying imaging to the treatment of psychosomatic disorders. This application of imaging prepared the way for biofeedback. When humanistic psychology became popular, the use of imaging was extended to healthy people. Pick up any self-help or self-development book, and I

would bet that there is a chapter on imaging. Within the last ten or so years, imaging has reached its peak through the efforts of transpersonal psychologists, as evidenced by Houston and Master's book, Mind Games. If you want a more complete history of the psychological application of imaging, I would suggest either Singer's Imagery and Daydream Methods in Psycho Therapy and Behavior Modification or Pelletier's Consciousness: East and West. (See Appendix # 2 for bibliographical information)

The only application of imaging to language arts that I know of has been made by transpersonal educators like Dr. Gay Hendricks. His application, however, has been limited to elementary and high school curricula and emphasized creative writing. D. Gordon Rohman in the 60's studied the effects of meditation upon writing. And James Moffett in his article, "Writing, Inner Speech, and Meditation," has advocated using "receptive thinking" to benefit writing. But to the best of my knowledge no one has attempted to apply imaging to the teaching of expository writing.

My realization that imaging could aid the writer developed inadvertently. I have been familiar with imaging from other areas of interest but did not see its application to my writing until graduate school. There I was, learning about writing and having one devil of a time with my own writing. Eventually, I realized, after reflecting upon what was going on in my head when I was writing effectively, that I had been creating a scenario in which the subject of my writing was being discussed by an imagined author and an imagined reader. On the basis of this realization, I began to cultivate the imagery. In the prewriting and the

first draft stages, my inner speech would find expression through a dialogue between my imagined author and my imagined reader who were both in an imagined situation. During the revision stages the inner speech found its expression through an imagined author's monologue. The more vivid these imagined experiences, the more effective the writing became.

I did not think of introducing my students to imaging until during my first year of teaching, a number of us, novice teachers, came to the conclusion that our female students seemed to write better than our male students. Of course, there could be a number of reasons for this, if, indeed, our conclusion was accurate, but it did get me thinking along these lines: In our culture women have been allowed to be more introspective than men. If this were indeed a factor for effective writing, then I needed to help my male students become more introspective. From my past experiences with imaging, I knew that it promoted introspection.

Three years ago I began tinkering with imaging in my classes. Using imaging to develop introspection became a secondary concern when I discovered that imaging could be applied in various ways, depending upon my curriculum restraints. And I have come to the conclusion that my uses of imaging in the classroom as a heuristic technique have been restricted only by my lack of ingenuity and not by any intrinsic limitations within imaging.

To give you an idea of my lack of ingenuity but more importantly to entice you into contemplating imaging's uses in your classroom, I'll summarize my present and projected uses of it. First and probably most importantly any type of imaging activity will begin to alter students'

attitudes about creativity and imagination. For the innately creative and imaginative student, those capabilities will no longer seem like capricious visitations by the muse but more like a predictable 8:00 wakeup call. For those students who thought they were unimaginative and uncreative, they will realize that those capabilities are not God given but acquirable.

My best results, I believe, have been achieved through using imaging to lessen writing anxiety. I guide the students through an imaging activity where they recall an event that gave them a sense of well being. Once they're reliving the event, I wean them from the images until they're focused solely on their sense of well being. Then when I sense that they're comfortable, I ask them to free write. In doing this, I'm trying to help them substitute pleasure for the anxiety that most of them feel when picking up a pen.

I have also obtained good results from using imaging to refresh the memories of students when they're writing "phase" autobiographies. Imaging enables them to recall in greater detail their past experiences, to relive their emotions and thoughts, to discover their motivations, and to put their experiences in perspective. I have used this approach also with descriptions and process papers. Imaging works well with any type of experiential writing.

In my research writing classes, I have extended imaging's application to researched historical events. After my students' preliminary reading is complete, I guide them into imagining that they were really at the historical events, experiencing them. This allows them to make an otherwise impersonal subject their own, indeed becoming as real and as

vital to them as their own memories are.

Imaging need not be limited to historical events. Conceivably it could be used to promote a better understanding of any subject. For instance, students could take an imaginary trip through an internal combustion engine; they could raft down the digestive system; they could experience the imagery of a poem; better yet, they could become the poem. The possibilities seem endless.

So far I've used imaging to expose students to their innate creativity, to lessen their writing anxiety, to improve their memories, and to personalize impersonal subjects. In the future, I would like to add to this list another use. Students have a hard time at assessing objectively their writing. Yet I have seen time and again students who intuitively knew what was effective or ineffective about their writing dismiss those inner promptings probably because they had no confidence in their own knowledge, preferring feedback from others in the belief that their readers knew better than they what they had wanted to convey. I'm not dismissing the importance of reader feedback but only putting it in its proper place--behind the writer's own feedback. I think through imaging it would be possible for students to imagine their own personal critical readers. During prewriting, the writing of the first drafts, and the revising of them, the students could turn inward and dialogue with their readers about the effectiveness of their writing. The inner reader would become for each student a predictable source for critical intuitions.

I hope by now after enumerating the uses of imaging in other disciplines and after presenting my uses of it in a writing class that you

are asking yourself, "This is all fine and good but how does one do it?"

Constructing an imaging activity is quite easy as long as you keep in mind five steps. These five steps primarily pertain to the first few imaging activities since once students become adept at the process, guidance from the teacher diminishes, though the stages in an abbreviated form should be followed by the students.

The steps are designed to gradually turn the students' awareness inward until they reach a point of "controlled spontaneity," a term which I've borrowed from Pelletier and Garfield and which describes that state where images appear effortlessly but yet fulfill the intent of the imaging activity. Then when the purpose of the activity has been satisfied, the steps return the students to their every day awareness.

STEP 1: Students are guided through a relaxation of their bodies. In the early imaging activities, the teacher will need to detail the directions. In the sample (see Appendix # 1), you'll see that I start with the feet and work up to the head and then back down again. Later after the students are familiar with progressive relaxation, a teacher can minimize his/her guidance. The relaxation step begins the internalization of awareness, and from my experiences, this is an essential step if imaging is to occur.

STEP 2: The students begin the actual imaging by willfully invoking a predetermined locale. As you can see in the sample, I'm using a room as the locale because I want the students to interact with images as a prelude to reliving a past experience. I use a movie theater when I want them to gather information by just watching images. Then either by asking

questions about or pointing out the details of the locale, the teacher guides the students in an exploration of their immediate locale. In the sample, I ask questions that would invoke visual, auditory, and olfactory images. At the beginning and end of this step, it's advisable to remind the students of the purpose of the imaging activity. This step can be abbreviated when the students become more proficient, and the locale can be either changed or expanded to fit the demands of different activities. Step two activates the students' imaging capabilities.

STEP 3: The teacher guides the students through the locale, again suggesting images for them to see or asking questions which compel the students to provide the images. This stage often marks a transition for some students from creating to receiving images. The purpose of this step, if the imaging activity is open ended, is to bring the students to a point where they become their own guides, allowing their individual images to arise in fulfillment of the activity's purpose. The sample activity is open ended because the students are asked to relive parts of their histories. If, however, the activity is set up with a common goal, such as returning to ancient Greece to discuss rhetorical theory with Aristotle, then the teacher could guide the entire class to the expected outcome. Step three fulfills the purpose of the imaging activity.

STEP 4: If the imaging activity is open ended then before control is given to the students, the teacher, as I have done in the sample, instructs the students that after the purpose of the activity has been fulfilled, they are to retrace the steps back to their every day awareness, or the teacher could set a time limit for the completion of the exercise and then

guide the students back. Once the steps have been retraced but before their eyes are opened, the students should move their bodies in some way, shrug their shoulders, rotate their heads, yawn, etc. This works like the decompression stage in scuba diving. The purpose of this step is to restore the students' every day awareness.

STEP 5: This is the most important step; after the imaging is done, the students write of their experiences.

These steps are the bones of the process, and an introductory imaging activity, including all five steps, would take about 50 minutes, allowing 15 for writing.

Though these five steps are the bones, from experience, I've learned that certain precautions can be taken to insure a more effective imaging experience.

First, students should, at least, know each other by their first names, and they should sit in a circle. Some students find it difficult to relax when surrounded by strangers or even when friends are sitting behind them. The closing of their eyes requires a certain amount of trust and usually elicits nervous laughter.

Second, students need to be familiarized with imaging. If you feel a need to legitimize it, then you can explain its uses in other disciplines. But I've preferred to keep it simple and explain it as disciplined daydreaming. I also summarize each step of the activity and explain the purpose for it before guiding the students through it.

Third, some students will not be able to visualize at first. You can either, as the saying goes, drop them in the pool to see if they'll sink or

swim. All will eventually swim. Or prior to the first imaging activity, you could take them through a sequence of visual memory exercises. For instance, let the students observe an object such as a vase for a couple of minutes, then take it away and ask them to write a description of it. This type of exercise works because to be a good observer you have to be a good imager. If all this fails then you might need to suggest to those students who still cannot image that just because their physical eyes are closed doesn't mean they can't open their mental eyes and see. If this doesn't work, then suggest they turn on a light, strike a match, or pull out a flash light.

Fourth, as with all instructions, wording needs to be precise and familiar to the audience. If unfamiliar or imprecise words are used, students may misinterpret the directions and go off on a tangent which may not fulfill the intent of the activity.

Fifth, the images suggested or implied in the first few activities should be familiar to the students so that the creation of the images in Steps two and three comes easily. For instance urban students would feel more comfortable with invoking city images than rural ones.

Sixth, once a locale is created by your students in Step two then your directions must be consistent with their expectations. For instance, if you start your students off in a room and then next have them on a mountain top, the students might have difficulty with the transition unless you've given them a means of getting to the summit. Or if you want them to deviate from natural laws, then you need to lay the ground work for that deviation. Let's say, you want your students to levitate, then you first

need to indicate that in this locale they can, indeed, levitate.

And finally seventh, delivery of the instructions should be as rhythmic as possible to promote a more relaxed and receptive state in your students.

Throughout this presentation, I have emphasized imaging as a teaching tool. I've informed you how it has been used in other disciplines, how I have used it, how to construct an imaging activity, and how to fine tune one. But there is more to it than just a teaching tool. The end of all this classroom imaging is to have the student take the process home and use it.

Writing, as we all know, is a solitary business--just a blank sheet of paper, a pen, thoughts, and silence, a lot of silence. The content for that writing is a ghost, rattling chains and moaning in the writer's mind. The event that will be written about, has already happened. The thought that inspired, has already been thought. The book--already read before the act of writing even commences. Alone with the pen and the empty sheet and all those ghosts which are such poor substitutes for those experiences that dazzled so, how does the writer recapture that dazzle? How can those bloodless, cold shades that flicker in the writer's mind be made warm and vital again like a deep kiss? How do <u>we</u> make those seemingly dead thoughts that populate our minds as we sit down to write, pulsate with life? How do <u>we</u> raise the dead? Imaging is a way.

I'll close this now with the remarks of three of my students to the question: how has imaging helped you in writing your "phase" autobiographies:

It helped a great deal. I was able to write more easily without stopping and thinking. Everything came to me, as if I was writing and acting.

It helped me a great deal; mostly because it "zoommed" into details, feelings, thoughts I felt at the time the experience took place.

It will benefit me on my writing; infact it gave me another viewpoint on my experience.

Thank you.

APPENDIX 1

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Sample Imaging Activity
Purpose: Autobiography

STEP ONE: (Students are guided through a progressive relaxation. This step can be abbreviated but not removed.)

Get comfortable. Now here's the risky part: close your eyes. Don't worry, I won't sneak up and pinch you. (Give them chance at this stage or a little later to laugh.)

Now that we have that out of our systems, let's close our eyes again. With your eyes closed, take a deep breath, hold it, and then let it out slowly. Take another deep breath, hold it, and slowly let it out. Continue doing this on your own--breathe in, hold it, breathe out. (Pause for half a minute.) As you become more aware of your breathing your body begins to relax. You feel as if it's the end of the day with no more classes to attend.

We'll now begin the progressive relaxation phase. Allow your awareness to detach itself from your breathing, and let it drift down to your feet. To relax any part of your body all you need do is either to tense that part first and then let it go limp or to give yourself a mental command to relax that part.

So first relax your feet; let the tension unravel out of them. Just let them go limp. With your feet relaxed, drift up to your calves. Give yourself that mental command, "Calves relax," and they will. Let them go limp. As your body becomes more relaxed, the less you will be aware of it. Now drift up to your thighs and relax them. You can feel the tension

unknotting itself and flowing away.

Now your feet, calves, and thighs are relaxed. Perhaps you can't even feel them, perhaps you feel warmth, or a heaviness or a lightness. Those feelings are okay--just signs of relaxation. Now drift into your torso and relax your abdomen--just let all those muscles go limp. Give yourself that mental command, "Abdomen relax," and it will. Now drift back to your lower back and relax it. When it is relaxed, drift up to your upper back and relax it. And then when it is relaxed, move to your chest and relax it. How are you breathing now?

Now your feet, legs, and torso are relaxed. Let your awareness drift to your shoulders; pay particular attention to them because we hold a lot of tensions in our shoulders when we write. Just let your shoulders relax; let them slip into whatever position is the most comfortable for them. Now with your shoulders relaxed move down into your arms and hands--relax them. Give yourself that mental command, "Arms, hands, relax," and they will. Pay particular attention to the hand and arm you write with.

Now your body from the neck down is at peace. Let your awareness drift into your neck. Pay particular attention to the neck, too, because we hold a lot of tension in it. Just let it go limp. Tell it to relax, and it will. If you want to rotate your head to induce greater relaxation, go right ahead.

After your neck is relaxed, move on up to your head, let your lower jaw drop away from your upper jaw--no reason to clench your teeth. Relax your cheek muscles, and perhaps you will feel them slip down from your eyes. Pay particular attention to your eyes. All that you should see

before your closed eyes is an expanse of dark space. If you see pin pricks of light, then your eyes are not relaxed. To relax your eyes, imagine that expanse of space to be black. The blacker you can make it, the more relaxed your eyes become.

With your eyes relaxed, go on up and relax your forehead, and finally relax your scalp and see if you can feel the weight of your hair.

All of you, your entire body, is relaxed. But let's deepen your relaxation a bit more. Feel a warmth or see a light entering through the top of your head. It fills your head, melting away any left over tensions. It fills your head with warmth and light. Then it overflows into your neck where it melts away those persistent tensions. The warmth flows out of your neck and over your shoulders and down your arms and into your hands. You begin to feel the warmth entering your chest, filling your lungs with warmth and light. It melts away those tensions, and then flows on, leaving you more relaxed. It flows into your abdomen, warming you, relaxing you. It flows into your thighs, down into your calves and finally it flows into your feet and then out into the floor, leaving you totally at peace with yourself. Take a few moments to enjoy this before we continue on.

STEP 2: (A locale is established; the actual imaging begins.)

Let your awareness return to your eyes. Look intently at that dark expanse before you. The more you stare out into this space, the more you become aware of a shape forming. As you keep looking at it, it finally becomes recognizable. You're looking at a door. And the more you look at the door, the more real it becomes. It becomes so real that you think you

can reach out and touch it. But before you do, know that this door leads into your special room. This room could resemble a room from your past or it could be an ideal room or a fantasy room. The best part of this room will be that it will make you feel very comfortable and very confident. If you can't see the door, perhaps it's because you still have your mental eyes closed. Tell yourself to open your mental eyes.

Now when you're ready, reach out and open that door and enter into your special room. (Pause) What do you see? What color is the room? (Pause) What do you see on the walls? Let yourself turn in a circle, surveying the whole room. What type of furniture is there? Look down at the floor. What do you see? (Pause) Do you hear any noises? Is there music playing? Are there any pleasant smells in the room? Perfume? Flowers? Food? (Pause) When you find yourself in your room, raise your hand and then lower it. For those of you who are there, take a few moments to explore your room further. For those of you who have yet to arrive, be patient with yourself. At this stage you may only feel a peaceful environment. This is fine. (Pause) Now you're all in your room and your journey back into your past is about to begin. (If some students don't indicate they're in their rooms, assume they are.)

STEP 3: (Students are guided through a locale to a jump off point if the activity is open ended; if not, then the teacher guides the students to their goal.)

Turn back to face the door that you came in through. But this time when you go out, you won't find yourself in that dark expanse of space. You'll find yourself in a carpeted, well-lit hallway.

Now open the door and walk out; as you do, turn left, and you'll see a door at the end of the hall which has a sign, stairs, above it. Make for that door. As you pass a closed door on your right, you hear laughter behind it. A little further on, behind another closed door on your left, you hear a stereo playing softly. You're now at the door at the end of the hall. On the other side of the door, there are stairs going down to the ground floor. There are 20 steps to be exact. Push the door open. And as I count, you will descend step by step. You're starting down now. 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5. You've reached a landing; take a breath and descend further. 6 -- 7 -- 8 -- 9 -- 10. Another landing. You take the hand rail and continue down. 11 -- 12 -- 13 -- 14 -- 15. You come to the last landing, so you take the next 5 steps quickly. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. The last step brings you face to face with a grey metal door; you push it open and step into another carpeted hallway. Directly in front of you, at the end of this hall, there is another door with a glowing red Exit sign above it. Walk towards that door. You pass closed doors both on your left and your right. On the other side of the door that is at the end of this hall and which you are still approaching, you will find that past experience which you have chosen to write about. If your experience took place in a room then on the other side of this door which you're almost at, you will find that room. If your experience happened outside, then you, too, will find the right locale on the other side. You have just reached the door.

STEP 4: (Students are reminded to retrace their steps, returning themselves to their every day awareness.)

But pause a moment before opening it. When you have finished reliving your

experience in detail, then retrace your steps back up into your special room and then back into this room.

STEP 5: (Students are reminded to write down their experiences once they have returned to their every day awareness.)

At that time, open your eyes and spend the rest of the class, writing down your experience. Remember as you pass through this door which you're standing in front of, you will enter your past experience and live it as if it is happening to you again. Now push the door open, and pass through to your experience.

APPENDIX 2

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APPLIED IMAGING

A Selected Annotated Bibliography

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Vaughan, Francis E. Awakening Intuition. Garden City: Anchor Books, 1979.

Imaging activities as a means of developing intuition are presented. (Most of these activities can be adapted to the teaching of writing.)

Watkins, Mary M. Waking Dreams. New York: Interface Books, 1976.

The history of the psychological application of imaging in Europe and the U.S. is reviewed.

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An extensive variety of relaxation techniques are presented.